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# America's Military Priorities

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## Conclusions

### **Developing National Strategy in Time of Transition**

We remain in transition to a new international system following the Cold War, a transition that is likely to last through the decade. The nature of the new system will be determined largely by the health of America's alliances with Europe and Japan, by the outcome of Russian and Chinese transitions, and the rate of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Developing a new grand strategy to replace containment has proven difficult precisely because the system remains in transition. Both the Bush and Clinton administrations have struggled with their international vision.

The Bottom Up Review was developed in the context of a strategy of "Engagement and Enlargement" that emerged as speeches during the first nine months of 1993. The crises with Iraq and North Korea in the autumn of 1994 confirmed the validity of the two major regional conflict threat envisioned by the Bottom Up Review. That concept may need to be amended in time, but it is appropriate for the interim.

### **The Nature of the Slowly Emerging International System**

There are at least three ways in which one might envision the emerging international system:

The first is a *geo-strategic* assessment of the major powers. We are in an historically unique moment of relative cooperation among the great powers: the United States, the European Union, Japan, China, Russia and perhaps India. Generally, the major powers don't envision each other as current threats and are not building military establishments to either attack or defend against each other. Regional economic blocks are forming, but are not being used by the great powers to develop closed alliances. Spheres of influence do not appear to overlap in ways that could cause conflict. However, it is unclear how much longer these favorable conditions will last.

Another way to assess the emerging international system is to look at political and economic orientations

of individual countries. From this perspective, the world can be seen as consisting of three groups. The dominant market democracies, a group much larger than the old "First World" of the Cold War, includes not just the OECD Countries, but most of Latin America, the "tigers" of East Asia, and gradually, parts of Central Europe. The success of the major transitional states, including Russia, China, India, and South Africa, is crucial to the future world order. Troubled states, primarily in Africa and the greater Middle East, are falling behind politically and economically and many are torn by rampant ethnic or religious tensions. These countries are the breeding ground for failed states and rogue states. The Administration's strategy of "enlargement" is most consistent with this perspective of the world order.

The third view looks at transnational threats. The porousness of international borders has positive effects: totalitarian regimes cannot last when they can no longer manage the flow of information to their people. But porous borders also mean that international crime, narcotics, disease, terrorists, illegal immigrants, pollution, and smugglers of nuclear material pose greater threats to our national security. Each has a greater impact on the average American than what happens in Somalia.

Combining these perspectives, there are grounds for both optimism and pessimism.

The grounds for optimism include:

- The major powers are at peace and there are few signs of exclusive spheres of influence or economic blocs;
- Most nations aspire to democracy and the market system; and;
- The U.S. remains dominant militarily.

The grounds for pessimism include:

- Transitions in Russia and China show signs of instability;
- Multi-ethnic states are fragmenting violently;
- Traditional alliances are under stress;
- Transnational threats are increasingly being felt in U.S. cities; and;
- Nuclear proliferation is creating greater risks in the event of conflict.

### **Values, Interests, and Military Intervention**

A decision to intervene militarily should be based on America's values and its interests. But values in the post-cold war era sometimes seem contradictory. For example:

- Should we support self-determination or the inviolability of internationally recognized borders?
- Should we stress the right to refuge, or protection from disruptive levels of illegal immigration?
- Should we stress human rights at the expense of vital US interests?

Similarly, our vital national interests have shrunk in the post-cold war era while foreign policy concerns

have expanded. We have intervened in situations that cannot be justified as vital to the United States.

Regions of vital interests to the U.S. include:

1. our alliances with Europe, Japan, South Korea and Australia,
2. our historic relationship with Israel and our role in the Middle East peace process,
3. our access to energy resources in the Persian Gulf, and
4. democracy and order in the Caribbean Basin.

### **Setting Military Priorities**

To deal with the environment, values and interests described above, the United States must fulfill five military missions, presented in priority order below.

The chart shows that most of the defense budget is allocated either to "investing in the future", (which is needed to hedge against the emergence of a peer competitor) or to the "current force structure" (which is needed to fight and win regional conflicts today). Both are important, for we cannot afford to mortgage our future or to create a hollow force today.

#### ***Mission #1: Hedging Against an Emerging Peer Military Competitor***

The most important focus for our national security policy should be the major powers. That entails sustaining our key alliance systems and supporting the transition to market democracy in Russia and hopefully China. In this context, we need a phased approach to NATO expansion, a new strategic dialogue with Japan, an agreement with Russia on its behavior in the Newly Independent States, continued support for market-based economic reform in China, and development of closer ties with India.

The United States is dealing from a position of great military strength. Our nuclear deterrent is sound. Our equipment is the most advanced and capable of any nation and our uniformed personnel exhibit a high degree of competence. The resources the nation commits to defense are substantial. Our defense spending is equal to that of the next six nations combined and we and our allies account for 80 percent of the world's expenditures on defense.

Yet it was not long ago that we had a military peer competitor, and if the reforms in Russia and China fail, we could have another. They might be particularly effective in their own regions of the world and could use commercially available technology to begin to close the gap. Hedging against this eventuality and deterring it if necessary should remain our primary military priority.

This requires investing in the future. The percentage of the defense budget dedicated to this investment has fallen from 45 per cent in 1986 to 30 per cent in 1996. This shift has been acceptable given the high tempo of current operations and the lack of a peer competitor, but it's time to reverse the trend.

Until recently, our investment in research, development, test and evaluation has held up well. It is programmed to drop \$7 billion over the next five years. Private commercial sector R&D can increasingly be used for military purposes (particularly in the areas of telecommunications, sensor technology, and automated data processing). The planned reduction needs to be monitored carefully to insure that we can

take full advantage of the revolution in military affairs (RMA).

The massive drop in procurement over the past decade is cause for concern. Due to the large investments of the 1980s, we have a considerable inventory of weapon systems that are better than anything our potential adversaries can bring to the table. There may also be reason to delay purchases somewhat to see what new weapons requirements the RMA suggests. Still, modernization of our equipment cannot be deferred indefinitely. In 1995, procurement of new Navy ships (6), fighter aircraft (28), and tanks (0), are all far below the steady state procurement rate needed to support the planned 1999 force. In ten to fifteen years, stocks of some key weapons systems will be approaching obsolescence. The recent \$25 billion increase over six years requested by the Administration is a down payment on the problem.

### ***Mission #2: Regional Military Conflict and the Bottom Up Review***

The Bottom Up Review concluded that the U.S. can cope with the challenge of two nearly simultaneous MRCs with a force structure 40 per cent smaller than the peak years of the 1980s. The forces need to be well trained and need adequate sea and airlift to make this strategy work.

The BUR force structure allows for only a small margin of error in executing a two MRC strategy. If a Desert Storm size force were once again deployed, only two active duty Army divisions, three Air Force wings and one Marine Expeditionary Force would remain available for the beginning of a second conflict. There would be a significant requirement for reserve forces, and it is likely that the United States would need to rely heavily on coalition partners. Programs like international military education and joint combined exercises become increasingly important.

An issue has been raised about the readiness of this force to engage in two MRCs. The O&M account actually had increased slightly in FY95 and remains relatively constant for FY96. Coupled with the reductions in force structure, more resources were being planned for readiness and operations per active duty unit than in previous years. In 1995, O&M spending per Army battalion was up 17 per cent over FY93, per Navy ship it was up 11 percent, and per combat aircraft it was up 12 percent. Unexpected peace operations in Iraq, Haiti, Rwanda etc. ate into that planned increase and created some readiness problems. The \$2.6 billion supplemental now before the Congress is designed to restore readiness.

The two MRC strategy also requires the overseas presence of U.S. forces, both in Europe and Asia. These forces provide confidence and stability in both regions, but they also serve as forward staging areas in time of conflict. Despite budget pressures in the U.S., American forces should remain at the planned level of about 100,000 in both Europe and Asia.

### ***Mission #3: Counterproliferation Efforts***

Nonproliferation and counterproliferation has been a priority for recent administrations. Some positive developments have occurred. South Africa, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine have each pledged to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Iraq's program has been further degraded under IAEA supervision. The Geneva Framework Agreement has provided a procedure which could remove North Korea's nuclear potential within a decade. It is a process under which North Korea can be held accountable.

Nonetheless, at least twenty countries, many hostile to the United States, are seeking to develop the capability to produce nuclear, biological and/or chemical weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. The May 1994 Deutsch Report recommends an annual increase in spending of about \$400 million on 14 counterproliferation programs.

#### ***Mission #4: Developing Cost Effective Responses to Transnational Threats***

Problems like drug trafficking, refugees and pollution are increasingly becoming transnational in character, as criminals operate across borders and environmental problems arise on a global scale. For example, the U.S. Southern Command has been preoccupied recently with Cuban rafters, Haitian refugees and drug interdiction. The military's bill for environmental programs was \$5.5 billion in FY94, including base restoration.

Some transnational threats seem to call for military forces to back up police forces that are outgunned and outmaneuvered by international criminal syndicates. Quasi-police operations have been normal for armed forces in many nations and for U.S. armed forces prior to World War II.

#### ***Mission #5: Engaging Selectively in Peace Operations for Failed States***

Attitudes toward peace operations have changed as ethnic conflicts and failed states have overextended UN capabilities and America's patience. PDD 25 has described the fairly strict set of criteria that will be used to determine when the U.S. will support or participate in UN peacekeeping operations.

We should approach peace operations cautiously because there is a high opportunity cost if we fail. Humanitarian relief and conflict containment may be appropriate temporary actions for U.S. forces. Regional powers should provide the peacekeeping forces, as the Europeans are doing in Bosnia. Unless our vital interests are involved, we should not commit ourselves to long term deployments, nor should we take on responsibility for nation-building or ending age-old ethnic tensions. When our vital interests are involved a more robust U.S. involvement is warranted.

There are two Titles in H.R.7 that deserve comment. Title IV would prohibit placing U.S. forces under command or operational control of foreign nationals acting on behalf of the United Nations, except if a Presidential Certification is made. Title V would subtract from America's annual UN peacekeeping assessment the non-reimbursed amount spent by U.S. forces in support of UN peacekeeping operations for the previous year. The first is unnecessary and the second could undermine UN peacekeeping worldwide.

In the Sinai and Macedonia deployments U.S. forces report to a non-U.S. force commander. Both operations have been extremely successful. U.S. officers serve as the commanders' chief of staff. U.S. battalion commanders reserve the right to consult the U.S. chain of command if they receive orders that are unwise or inconsistent with their mission. There is no reason to change these command arrangements. Perhaps Title IV should be limited to UN Article VII peace enforcement operations where conflict is expected.

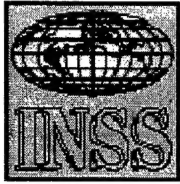
Title V is more troublesome. In the Section 101 findings, the bill notes that U.N. assessments to the U.S. for peacekeeping missions totalled almost \$1.5 billion in 1994. The non-reimbursed cost of U.S. military participation in UN mandated operations (according to Sec. 101) was \$1.7 billion. If Title V were in effect, the U.S. would have to default completely on its assessed contribution. If other nations followed suit, there would be little money for peace operations.

These two provisions misjudge the value to the United States of UN peacekeeping. Many of these multilateral deployments are in areas important to U.S. interests like Kuwait, Israel's borders, Haiti, El Salvador and Cyprus. Most of the larger deployments were engineered by the U.S. in the Security Council to further our own national security interests. Some provided international legitimacy for U.S. deployments. Other UN deployments provide for humanitarian relief widely supported by the American

people, but other nations are called upon to send forces. A collapse of UN peacekeeping would be a severe setback for U.S. interests.

**About the Author:** Dr. Hans Binnendijk is the director of INSS. A version of this paper was presented as testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 7, 1995. It does not necessarily represent the views of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or any other government agency.





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## Conclusions

The United States must give priority to its relationships with the great powers, both to sustain cooperative relations, if possible, but also to hedge against and deter the possible emergence of a peer competitor in the decades ahead.

Preparing to win regional conflicts, overcoming transnational threats, and participating selectively in peace operations are also important missions. The financial savings suggested for UN peace operations in H.R.7 are marginal compared to the overall defense budget. The damage they would do to our national security is enormous. Unless vital interests are at stake, the United States should engage cautiously and selectively in humanitarian missions and containment of local conflicts and should beware of choosing sides in civil wars.

The drop in the proportion of the defense budget set aside for "investment" needs careful monitoring. R&D spending appears adequate this year but cuts planned for the future should not undermine efforts to take full advantage of the potential revolution in military affairs. The low levels of spending on procurement might be tolerated for another year or two because of the large arsenal purchased in the 1980s. But the steady spending increases in procurement recommended by the Administration for FY 1997-2001 will be needed to avoid block obsolescence of key weapons systems 10-15 years from now.

While readiness and quality of life are vital, we cannot afford to postpone greater investment in the future for much longer. Since we cannot cut any deeper into the current force structure, the defense budget will have to increase in the future to assure growth in the investment accounts.

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